The Language and Style of Latin Rubrics in Medieval Liturgical Easter Drama*

In this article I aim to discuss the specific form, language and style of Latin rubrics preserved in medieval manuscripts of Latin liturgical Easter drama. Generally, rubrics are commonly found in most medieval dramatic texts of both liturgical and non-liturgical origin. In the field of medieval theatre studies, rubrics are usually treated as a special type of medieval stage direction or even as directorial or production notes\(^1\), and it is from this perspective they are usually interpreted and analysed. As the only direct evidence of possible staging forms and techniques, rubrics give theatre researchers at least some overall idea of how a medieval drama may have been staged.

Less attention, however, has been paid to the specific form, language and style of the rubrics themselves. One of the reasons for this may be that the focus has traditionally been primarily on the main text (the primary text or Haupttext) of Easter plays, while rubrics as stage directions were generally considered to be the secondary, «subordinate» text (Nebentext). Moreover, in the case of medieval drama, rubrics are often very scarce and unreliable. They can be indecipherable and difficult to interpret, and in extreme cases they may be missing completely. We can find dramatic texts with minimal or incomplete rubrics, and conversely, there are plays containing very detailed and extensive rubrics\(^2\). It is therefore hardly possible to find or define general rules and uniform traits of the style and form of rubrics.

As a basis for much of the discussion in this article we have taken the rubrics of the Latin liturgical Easter play Visitatio sepulchri («Visit to the Sepulchre»)\(^3\). Every extant written version of this play is different and unique either in the

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\(^1\) See e. g. Anke Roeder, *Die Gebärde im Drama des Mittelalters, Osterfeiern, Osterspiele*, München, 1974, who uses the term *Regieanweisungen* for rubrics.

\(^2\) See e. g. the Visitatio Sepulchri play (hereafter the VS play) from the Regularis Concordia from the 10th century, discussed below.

\(^3\) Besides the VS plays, I also take into consideration the rubrics of several extant versions of the so-called *Ludi Paschales*, extensive Latin Easter plays from Tours, Benediktbeuren and Klosterneuburg.
sequence of the chants and texts or in its rubrics or both. In addition, there are hundreds of extant versions of Latin Easter plays, so it is almost impossible to capture and reflect all varieties and specific aspects of the rubrics of liturgical Easter drama. Despite this great variability, we will nevertheless attempt – using some of the selected texts – at least partly to reflect on the unique language, style and form of the rubrics in general, as well as with regard to the special connotative levels of the vocabulary used.

The term «rubric» and the purpose of rubrics in the context of medieval liturgical drama

At the outset, let us briefly define what is meant by the term «rubrics» and what is the function and role of rubrics in the texts of medieval liturgical drama. The Latin word itself, rubrica, is a feminine substantive derived from the adjective rubricus, which is etymologically related to the adjective ruber, «red», and the verb rubere, «to be or go red». Originally, in classical Latin, the term denoted the red ochre or chalk (rubrica terra) that was used for writing titles and section headings of written laws, and by extension the term sometimes referred to an entire legal text. The term thus designated a rubric, a heading of a law and subsequently a law itself. In medieval Latin, the term generally referred to red pigment (ink) or a (capital) letter in red ink. It also meant a title, section (heading), article or the text of a law. From the language of law, the term was soon adopted for liturgical and religious usage to mean a prescription, rule(s) or an instruction given with reference to the course and form of a mass or liturgical ceremony, eventually rules for monks.

Originally, such rules were communicated orally, but by the Early Middle Ages, they can already be found in the form of written rubrics, recorded in early liturgical collections (sacramentaries) and serving as instructions for selecting

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4 No two versions of the VS play turned out the same, in either their dramatic structure or their sequence of sung texts. The extant rubrics reveal a similar enormous variety because each ecclesiastical community put its own mark on the text and music.

5 There are about a thousand versions of the VS play that were produced as part of the Easter liturgy. The manuscripts range from the 10th century to approximately 1600 and they have been collected from about 700 different monasteries and churches and cathedral libraries.


7 Ibid.


9 Du Cange, Glossarium, VII, p. 230; Lexicon, VIII, 4, p. 577 and others.

10 Du Cange, Glossarium, VII, ibid.; J. F. Niermeyer, Mediae, ibid.; Lexicon Mediae, ibid.
liturgical texts and chants which were to be used at masses and ceremonies. These Latin rubrics were collected in special books (commonly called *Ordines*), and by the end of the Middle Ages, due to the spread of the printing press, their corpus had expanded into separate books.\(^\text{11}\)

Rubrics appear as rules and instructions not only for masses and church ceremonies in different liturgical sources (mostly in ceremonial and prayer books), but also as rules and instructions for early liturgical dramatic ceremonies such as the Palm Sunday procession, the Adoration of the Cross, Burial of the Cross and Elevation of the Cross and also for the Easter play «Visit to the Sepulchre». These Easter ceremonies and plays were usually recorded in antiphonaries, breviaries, processional books, and occasionally in special play books.

The primary aim of rubrics of the early dramatic Easter ceremonies and Easter plays of the *Visitatio sepulchri* type was then identical to rubrics of other ecclesiastical liturgical ceremonies, as Easter ceremonies and plays were from the beginning a common additional part or extension of Easter liturgy\(^\text{12}\) whose rubrics were mostly meant to fix and specify rules, conventions and forms of liturgical ceremonial gestures to be used in the staging of the plays. This liturgical, religious aspect of rubrics serving as rules or prescriptions that «safeguard» the «proper» order of the Easter dramatic ceremony and the presence of necessary liturgical actions and gestures\(^\text{13}\) indicates that their language and vocabulary will be strongly influenced by the world of Christian liturgy and rite. Depending on the level of determination by liturgy of a single *Visitatio sepulchri* text, its rubrics may contain references and allusions to various ceremonial acts, gestures and other liturgical elements, including liturgical vestments and objects. One has to keep in mind that it is only in the rubrics that this liturgical connection and all the ceremonial components that are inherent part of the plays are reflected. These liturgical references in rubrics form a specific language level and vocabulary that will be discussed in detail later.

Apart from the attempt to codify the ceremonial aspects and liturgical ritual of Easter plays, rubrics were also written in order to assist with the various and changing practicalities of staging particular dramatic texts. They therefore provide details relating to the location and nature of specific elements of the performance, forming a set of instructions or practical «blueprints» for staging subsequent productions of the theatrical event in question. This basic «theatrical» information commonly includes the name of the character or speaker, the mode of delivery and movement, the costumes and props, and the specification of the stage space. The theatrical or directorial information


\(^{12}\) The Easter plays were sung either before the final hymn «Te Deum» of the Easter Matins or before the introit to the Easter Mass.

\(^{13}\) See the discussion on the gestures and movements below.
contained in rubrics thus creates a separate language and vocabulary level of rubrics – the language of stage directions or production notes.

Besides this directorial information related to the staging of Easter plays and the information about the liturgical background, some rubrics also provide allusions and references related solely to the textual basis of the plays, the New Testament. This is logically consistent, since the dialogue (or rather, the chants) is directly based on the Bible, the principal source of liturgical drama. Some rubrics can, as a result, take even epic, narrative forms, repeating or paraphrasing the biblical text and explaining its meaning. Sometimes, it must be admitted, this biblical paraphrasing provided in the rubrics gives no hint whatsoever about the way the play was meant to be staged, and one can hardly treat such rubrics as stage directions.

The language, vocabulary and the overall style of rubrics is consequently very diverse and multifaceted, as it encompasses the world of the Bible, the world of liturgy, and the world of drama, the theatre. The different language and vocabulary levels – liturgical, theatrical and biblical – will be further discussed, together with the individual components reflected in the selected rubrics.

The Rubrics of the Visitatio sepulchri from Winchester

In our study and analysis of Easter drama rubrics, one of the plays that cannot be overlooked is the famous 10th century Easter play Visitatio sepulchri, from the Winchester monastery, due to its rich and detailed rubrics. It is preserved in the book of Regularis Concordia dating from the 11th century. The text, commonly known as the «Visitatio sepulchri from Winchester» is interesting for several reasons. It is one of the oldest extant versions of the Visitatio sepulchri play (originally dating from the 10th century). As opposed to other simple Easter texts from the 10th and 11th century, the Winchester play has unusually elaborate and extensive rubrics. The rubrics already specify some parts of a mise-en-scène, costumes, props and voice and gesture, and give us valuable information about not only how a particular line should be sung, but also how it should be acted. While the lengthy rubrics are in the form of detailed and extensive descriptions, the main dramatic text of the sung play itself is written only in the incipite form, which was common practice in medieval manuscripts of liturgical music and drama.

14 See for example the rubrics of the VS play from Winchester discussed below.
15 See e. g. the rubrics referring to the apparition and dissappearance of Christ, cited bellow.
16 The monastic book Regularis Concordia was most probably compiled by the abbot of the Winchester monastery, St. Aethelwold. Apart from standard monastic practices, the book also includes other church ceremonies that were practised in the monastery already in the 10th century. Among them are also the ceremonies of Good Friday, associated with the VS play, i. e. Adoration of the Cross and Deposition (burial) of the Cross.
Let us cite the long introductory rubric of the play 17:

Dum tertia recitatur lectio, quatuor fratres induant se, quorum unus alba indutus acsi ad aliud agendum ingrediatur, atque latenter sepulchri locum adeat, ibique manu tenens palmam, quietus sedeat. Dumque tertium percelebratur responsorium, residui tres succedant, omnes quidem cappis induti, turibula cum incensu manibus gestantes ac pedetemptim ad similitudinem quaerentium quid, veniant ante locum sepulchri. Aguntur enim haec ad imitationem angeli sedentis in monumento, atque mulierum cum aromatibus venientium, ut ungerent corpus Ihesu. Cum ergo ille residens tres velut erraneos, ac aliquid quaerentes, viderit sibi adproximare, incipiat mediocri voce dulcisone cantare.

The rubric of the text says nearly everything. Firstly, the liturgical context is mentioned (« during the reading of the third lesson »). Following this, there is information about the arrival of the four brothers and the specification of their costumes and necessary props indicating their role: a white alb and a palm for the brother representing the angel « who shall enter unobtrusively at the place of the sepulchre » and copes and thuribles with incense for the brothers representing the Marys, « in the manner of seeking something and coming to the sepulchre ».

In the description of the action of the characters, the rubric clearly refers to acting, role-playing and imitation, using words such as acsi, ad similitudinem, ad imitationem, velut. Even the mode of delivery of the brother representing the angel is specified: he is to sing to the Marys « in a sweet and moderate voice (mediocri voce dulcisone) ». These instructions as to the way of acting – the role-playing as well as the movements of the characters (together with other information about the costumes and the stage space, etc.) – create the basis of the vocabulary and language of the rubrics, which are very specific, practical, and above all theatrical, reflecting the staging of the play itself.

The rubrics, however, also provide the reader with extra information that is not related to the staging itself but explains the actions of the characters and the meaning of the scenes based on the New Testament: these things shall be done « in imitation of the angel seated at the tomb and the women coming with the ointments to anoint the body of Jesus ». This rather epic narrative tone serves as a paraphrasing of the content of the scene and also as a form of introduction and explanation of the scene that is to come. The biblical paraphrases and allusions are thus logical here and form a specific, « literary » language level of the rubrics.

A similarly detailed and explanatory mode also appears in the rubric following the antiphon Venite et videte. Firstly, the rubric describes the action of the angel showing the Marys the empty grave: the angel « is to rise and lift the veil and show them the place bare of the cross and then the shroud in which the

17 Citation of the rubric from David Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, Boston, 1975, p. 27.
cross had been wrapped (surgat, et erigat velum, ostendatque eis locum cruce nudatum, sed tantum linteamina posita, quibus crux involuta erat) »18. When the Marys see it, they are to place the thuribles down into the tomb and take up the shroud and spread it out before the clergy « as if demonstrating that Lord has risen and is not wrapped in it (ac veluti ostendentes, quod surrexerit Dominus et iam non sit in illo involutus) »19. During this they are to sing the antiphon 
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.

The rubric serves above all as an important reference to the climax of the play and to its ceremonial, liturgical context: the Visitatio sepulchri play here is directly related to the preceding Easter ceremonies of Good Friday, the Adoratio crucis and Depositio crucis20, as we can see from the rubric referring to the moment of resurrection: it mentions the grave bare of the cross (a symbol of Jesus Christ) – the same cross that was venerated and then buried and covered by linteum, the shroud, on the previous evening. The shroud was left in the sepulchre and found by the Marys during the Visitatio sepulchri Easter play. When the Marys together have displayed the shroud to the clergy as a proof of Christ’s resurrection (while singing the antiphon Surrexit Dominus), they finally « place it on the altar (superponant linteum altari) » during the final hymn Te Deum laudamus.

In comparison with the brief and rather concise rubrics of most Visitatio sepulchri plays, the rubrics of the Winchester ceremony are rather narrative in character, explaining the unfolding scenes and their meaning in not only a biblical but also a liturgical context. The allusion to the preceding Good Friday ceremonies requires the past tense in the verbs21. The liturgical level of the vocabulary includes numerous references to the ceremony and liturgical objects, especially in the final section of the play (crux, thuribulae, altar, etc.). The liturgical references and ceremonial acts alluded to by the rubrics correspond to the origin and nature of the Visitatio sepulchri play in general: from the beginning the Easter music-drama served to celebrate the liturgy, and the relationship between the ceremonial and drama is a very close one. The difference can be sometimes blurred, even imperceptible. However, rubrics in even the simplest of the plays such as the Visitatio sepulchri text from Winchester show the theatrical tendency, the element of representation or role-playing – everything that makes the ceremony a play: the singers really represent or imitate the characters of angels and other biblical figures.

18 D. Bevington, Medieval Drama, p. 28.
19 Ibid.
20 See n. 16.
21 Cf. crux involuta erat, see n. 18.
The language of rubrics and the means of specification of individual components of the play

Rubrics of dramatic Easter texts differ not only in the quantity and degree of detail, but also in the ways of specifying individual components of the performance. Consequently, these different means of reference have an impact on the language and specific vocabulary of rubrics.

One must of course take into account the conventional local practices and oral traditions related to the staging of a particular play in a given monastery (or church, etc.). This may not be always reflected in the rubrics, or may be reflected only partially. There is also the question of the manuscript tradition and the «originality» of the rubrics and their method of preservation. In some dramatic texts, or more specifically, in their rubrics, there is only a modicum of references to the production itself. Such comments can occasionally be limited to speech attributions, and, in extreme cases, they are missing entirely.

Regarding the elementary stage direction, that of speech attribution, this may be specified in several different ways in rubrics. Sometimes the rubric gives just the name of a *dramatis persona* with no further information about the actor who represents the character: the name is either a concrete one such as, for instance, *Maria, Ihesus (Christus, Deus, Dominus, Salvator), Angelus, Apostoli, Petrus, Iohannes*, or a more general one, as in the case of rubrics referring to the three Marys (*Mulieres, Christicolae*) or to the apostles Peter and John (*Discipuli or Iuvenis, Senex*).

In some rubrics, there are also very neutral references to Jesus as *Persona* or *ille*. This perhaps is to do with the idea of the holiness and intangibility of the character, which is apparent from the early, ceremonial plays that already include the scene of the revelation of Jesus. In contrast, the rubrics of some plays that intend to portray Jesus as a gardener react sensitively to the context of the scene, calling him firstly *Ortulanus* and later, after the moment of recognition, *Iesus*. The rubrics of *Ludus paschalis* from Klosterneuburg are of interest in this respect: in the «gardener's scene» Christ is introduced as «Jesus as in the form of a gardener (*Ihesus quasi in specie Ortulani*)», but when Mary Magdalene recognises him, the rubric registers this moment in words: «Jesus as in the form of Christ (*Ihesus quasi in specie Christi*)».

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22 It is possible that the information about the cast and overall staging praxis of a given play could be fixed and transmitted only orally, or the play served just as a sort of universal script without any production notes.

23 In the oldest extant version of the VS play from Prague St. George Convent from the 12th century Jesus’s name is mentioned by no rubric in the text. One finds only a personal pronoun *ille* before his line; other rubrics indicate that Christ’s lines were spoken (respectively sung) by other characters, the angel and the chorus.

24 Published by Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, I, Oxford, 1933, p. 421-425.
Together with the speaker's name, rubrics usually provide information about what the speaker is to say, answer or sing. The conjunctive form of the verbs (e.g. *tres Mariae carent*) serving as the imperative is, consequently, very frequent and logical; this applies to most of the verbs used in rubrics of Easter plays. This is, however, by no means a hard and fast rule, as there are texts with rubrics using the indicative form only, or a mixture of the conjunctive and indicative forms. Some rubrics avoid the conjunctive verb form for the verbs *dicere, respondere*, while other verbs remain in the conjunctive. Nevertheless, the use of the conjunctive verbal form supports the directorial aspect of rubrics.

However, it is not unusual to omit verbs (the predicate) in introducing a speech (a song) performed by the character: in these cases, the name of the character (the speaker) is often mentioned without any information about the act of singing or speaking. Similarly, the speaker's name can be replaced with a pronoun (as for instance *ille, illa*) or a neutral designation (*prima, secunda, tertia* *persona*), provided that the character's name was already mentioned in a previous rubric, or it is clear from the context of the dramatic text. Sometimes rubrics may give only the addressee (e.g. *ad Mariam, ad personam*), again provided that the speaker was mentioned in previous rubrics.

Some rubrics introducing the speaker before the respective line relate the name of the dramatic character directly to the performer (usually a cleric, monk, churchman or someone of clerical status). The rubrics often use phrases that evoke role-playing, imitation and representation of a character25, and may be related to the theatrical level of vocabulary. For example, among rubrics specifying the role of the Marys, phrases like the following can appear: *presbyteri in persona Mulierum*26, *tres fratres in specie Mulierum*27, *tres clerici iuvenes in modum Mulierum*28, *tres ad imitationem Mulierum*29, *presbyteri... in loco Mariarum*30 etc. Similar phrases related to the role and the act of playing are found also in rubrics introducing other characters, e.g. the apostles (*duo canonici tamquam Apostoli*31, *duo alii presbyteri in signum Apostolorum*32) or the two apostles (*duo quasi Petrus et Iohannes*33).

Another way of speech attribution is a sole reference to the performers with no mention of the characters' names. Some rubrics simply give general information about the performer before the line to be delivered (e.g. *sacerdos, presbyter,*

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26 VS from uncertain provenance, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 325-326.
27 VS from Fécamp, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 264.
28 VS from Jerusalem, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 262.
29 VS from Prüfening, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 597.
30 VS from Soissons, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 304-305.
31 VS from Narbonne, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 352-353.
32 VS from Troyes, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 291-292.
33 VS from Passau, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 352-353.
puer, canonicus...) or a group of performers (canonici, fratres, sorores, subdiaconi...). Such «scenario» rubrics at the same time reflect medieval staging and casting practices, which were partly the result of convention (e. g. Jesus was usually represented by a priest or high-ranking cleric), and partly determined by the local staging traditions and practices of each ecclesiastical institution.

However, most liturgical Easter drama rubrics also cover other components of staging, though they are not consistent in their description of all of them. The rubrics provide quite a large amount of information about the costumes of the characters (and the conventional props associated with them). Most characters of Easter dramas wore ecclesiastical vestments (and associated liturgical objects), so it comes as no surprise that the language of rubrics contains a large, indeed predominant, number of terms from this realm. At the same time, rubrics describing certain dramatic characters reflect conventional costuming of biblical characters in direct relation to medieval iconography. For example, in the rubrics describing the angelic costumes one may read of white albs with wings on their shoulders and red stoles over the performers’ shoulders (duo... inducti admictis albis paratis, super humeros alas habentes et stolas rubeas super humeros circumdantes alas34) or lilies in hands (cum alis et lilis in manibus preparati35) or palm branches and candlesticks (palmam in sinistra, ramum candelabrum plenum tenens in manu dextra36).

The costume-related information is not always as detailed as in the above mentioned citations; sometimes the rubric provides only a general reference to the «usual» or common costume of dramatic characters; e. g. in the rubric describing two choir boys «vested like angels (duo pueri... ornati sicut Angeli37)». A similar and very general reference also appears in the rubric introducing those playing the Marys, choir boys, who shall «wear girls’ vestments like the three Marys (pueros... indutos vestibus puellaribus, tanquam tres Marias38)». According to another rubric, Jesus shall be dressed in gardener’s vestments (Christus in habitu Ortolani39), which was perhaps a kind of medieval contemporary clothing40.

Sometimes rubrics describe only the typical part of a costume or symbolic object (a «prop») that, in accordance with medieval iconography, was

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34 VS from Besançon, K. Young, The Drama, p. 290-292.
35 VS from Padua, K. Young, The Drama, p. 294-295.
36 VS from the Fleury Playbook, K. Young, The Drama, p. 393-397. The angel’s costume itself is very sumptuous: the angel is vested in an alb decorated with gold (vestitus alba deaurata) and has a mitre on his head although without a chasuble (mitra tectus caput etsi deinfulatus). According to Dunbar H. Odgen, The Staging of Drama in the Medieval Church, University of Delaware Press, 2002, p. 127, the term deinfulatus is derived from infilatus, «wearing a chasuble» (i. e. priestly office) and meant «but without a chasuble».
37 VS from Clermont-Ferrand, K. Young, The Drama, p. 244-245.
38 VS from Regensburg, K. Young, The Drama, p. 295-297.
39 VS from Coutances, K. Young, The Drama, p. 408-410.
conventionally related to the character. Such a feature or prop at the same time helped the medieval spectator to identify the character on the stage. The rubric, for example, may refer only to the palm of the angel (puer... qui Angelum representat... palmam manu tenens)\(^ {41}\)). In another case the Marys are evoked in rubrics by reference to thuribles (tres Marie procedunt cum thuribulis)\(^ {42}\) serving as vessels for ointments\(^ {43}\). Jesus will appear to other persons with a cross in his hands\(^ {44}\) or a banner (vexillum), the iconographic symbol of the Risen Lord. The secular characters of Easter drama are often referred to by means of a typical, characterising object: e.g. the swords (enses) of the soldiers guarding the sepulchre, or the pyxes (pyxides) with the ointments belonging to the spice seller, or the money (pecunia) that the Jews show to the soldiers.\(^ {48}\)

The vocabulary of rubrics describing the costumes of Easter drama characters is thus on the one hand rich in words concerning liturgical clothes and their parts (alba, tunica, cappa, dalmatica, stola, superpellicium, mitra etc.) and other objects connected to the medieval church and church iconography (thuribulae, crux, vexillum,...). On the other hand, a limited number of rubrics refer to «theatrical» costumes with «realistic» elements, made especially for the occasion, thus introducing vocabulary that is more secular. White angels occasionally have wings and a barefoot Christ as a gardener wears a hat on his head and holds a spade in his hand. In the play from Mont-Saint-Michel, Jesus (referred to in the rubric as Deus) is not robed in an ornate fashion as usual, which would have meant wearing a sumptuous liturgical vestment, but is depicted as wearing much plainer, «realistic» apparel: an alb «as if dyed in blood (habitum de alba tincta sicut de sanguine); he is barefoot, with a diadem and a beard (cum dyademate et barba, nudibus pedibus).»

The oscillation between liturgical and dramatic (theatrical) aspects as reflected by the language and vocabulary of rubrics is most visible in the ways the patterns of movement and gestures and acting are specified. The majority of movements and gestures reflected by rubrics are those determined by the

\(^{41}\) VS from Toul, Karl Young, The Drama, p. 265-266.
\(^{42}\) VS from Norimberg, K. Young, The Drama, p. 398-401.
\(^{43}\) Occasionally we read also of vases, pyxes, candles.
\(^{44}\) Cf. veniat Iesus, ... ferens in manibus crucem, Ludus paschalis from Tours, K. Young, The Drama, p. 438-447.
\(^{45}\) Cf. Iesus appareat cum vexillo, Peregrinus from Carmina Burana, K. Young, The Drama, p. 463-465.
\(^{46}\) Cf. Ludus Paschalis from Benediktbeuren (Carmina Burana), K. Young, The Drama, p. 432-437.
\(^{47}\) Cf. VS from St. George Convent («Kunhuta's version»), K. Young, The Drama, p. 405-407.
\(^{48}\) Cf. Ludus paschalis from Benediktbeuren (Carmina Burana), K. Young, The Drama, p. 432-437.
\(^{49}\) See n. 34-35.
\(^{50}\) «stantem discalciatum et pilleatum, fossorium in manu habentem», VS from Nottuln, cited from D. H. Odgen, The Staging, p. 129.
dramatic action, the play itself. We can call these dramatic or theatrical gestures and movements as opposed to ceremonial or liturgical ones that are not directly related to the course of the play and the action of the characters, but that connect the play with the liturgical ceremony and ritual.

Liturgical gestures usually appear in the most sacred scenes of Easter plays, such as the announcement of the resurrection of Christ and the displaying of the shroud, or the apparition of Christ to other characters, etc. These gestures are most often to be found in rubrics of plays that are comparatively more liturgical and ceremonial in their tone. For example, in the 14th century Easter play from the St. Vitus cathedral in Prague52, during the announcement of the Resurrection, the prelate must turn to the east and bend his knee three times, saying that Christ was resurrected (prelatus... versoque vultu ad orientem cum trina genuflexione cantet). At the end of the play before the final hymn, «the prelate must kiss the shroud and give peace to the brothers and to the people (prelatus deosculatur lintheamina, et dat pacem ad fratres et ad populum)». The ceremonial gestures mentioned by the rubrics here are triple genuflexion (genuflexio), kissing the sudary (osculum sudarii), and the kiss of peace (osculum pacis). The rubric also mentions the act of turning to the east (the right-hand side), symbolising the sacred world (as opposed to the west, the secular side). Some ceremonial gestures are more integrated in the dramatic action of the characters, for example, prostratio (prostration), often used by Mary Magdalene or other characters in the scene of Christ’s revelation53 as a gesture of reverence and adoration54.

Besides the liturgical vocabulary, based on ceremonial gestures and actions linked to liturgy and ritual, the rest of the vocabulary describing other, i. e. dramatic movements and gestures, is closely related to the action of the play. Most of the rubrics describing movements and gestures are based on the text of the sung dialogue (the antiphons and other liturgical chants), which is derived from the text of the Bible itself. Concerning e. g. the two apostles running to the sepulchre, the rubrics contain verbs specifying this movement (currere, festinare, velociter pergere etc.), which corresponds to the text of the antiphon Currebant duo, to John 20, 455. Similarly, rubrics usually mention the quick movement of the three Marys, hurrying to tell the apostles about the Resurrection (e. g. festinenter redeant56) as is mentioned by the Bible57 and in the words

52 K. Young, The Drama, p. 344-345.
53 Cf. e.g. the play from Mont-Saint-Michel, K. Young, The Drama, p. 372-374.
54 On other ceremonial gestures expressing adoration and reverence, such as inclinatio (the act of bowing before the altar or Christ himself), incensatio (incensation of the altar, or of the sepulchre), osculum devotionis (the kiss of devotion) see the discussion by A. Roeder, Die Gebärde, p. 56-65.
55 As opposed to verbs evoking quick movement of the apostles in some plays the rubrics refer to walking (cf. e.g. the play from the St. Vitus cathedral in Prague; see n. 52).
56 The rubric is repeated in several Easter plays from Austrian-German region (Salzburg, Chiemsee, Passau and others), see the texts in K. Young, The Drama, p. 326-338.
57 Vulg. Matth. 28, 7; Marc. 16, 8.
of the angel inviting Marys to « go quickly » and tell the fact of the Resurrection to the disciples (the antiphon Non est hic).

The range of qualities of movements and gestures referred to by rubrics and the way they attempt at verisimilitude are often surprising. On the other hand, some rubrics describe the action only very vaguely, giving us no idea how the movement was really staged: e. g. in the case of the apparition and disappearance of Jesus Christ we find a rather naïve epic description of the action: rubrics use often verbs such as manifestare, apparere, evanescere, disparere, etc. that do not really express the actual way in which Christ was supposed to enter and exit the stage.58

Besides the movements and gestures that are primarily determined by the text of the dialogue (based on the Bible), rubrics also specify movements that draw upon the dramatic action in relation to the concrete stage space of the play. The vocabulary of the rubrics is thus more variable and dependent on the staging practices and mise-en-scène of a given play. Within the description of stage movements (going, entering, exiting, etc.) one finds references to specific parts of the church, cathedral or monastery (e. g. the altar, chapel, choir, aisle etc.) or to a purpose-built construction there. Apart from the concrete locations, there are also general, unspecified suggestions called locus (loci) in rubrics (e. g. Maria Magdalena procedente de loco59) that refer to individual pre-designated sites within the stage space.60

Rubrics often also specify movements and gestures concerned with a concrete object (« prop »). One of these is, for instance, the shroud as the proof and symbol of Christ’s resurrection, which is frequently removed from the grave by the angels, Marys or apostles and displayed to others.61 The movement connected with the act of showing the shroud is closely connected with deictic gestures and gestures of ostension. These are derived from movements of the hands. They express the act of pointing out (to a place, person or object) or exhibiting something and usually serve as confirmation and verification of the accompanying words. The rubrics in their description use corresponding verbs like ostendere, (de)monstrare, manifestare etc., or they may also mention the hands or fingers that are involved in the action, and of course the object of the ostension (e.g. manibus interim demonstrantes Sepulchrum62, locum digito ostendens63), etc.

58 However, we find also more concrete verbs in rubrics for entering and exiting of Christ, as (ad) venire, discedere, retrocedere etc.
59 VS from St. George Convent (Kunhuta’s version), K. Young, The Drama, p. 402-404.
60 On possible meanings of locus see Dunbar H. Odgen, The Staging, p. 120.
61 Cf. e. g. the final rubrics of the VS play from Winchester (see n. 17), the very first documentation of this movement.
62 VS from St. Gallen, K. Young, The Drama, p. 621.
In addition to the hand gestures, the rubrics of some Easter plays also provide explicit information about head gestures such as the turning of the face towards the recipient (*Thomas versa facie contra populum*⁶⁴) or symbolically to the east or west (*faciebus versis ad occidentem*⁶⁵). Some of the head gestures are predominantly expressions of moods, as is the case when the Marys bow their heads on their way to the Sepulchre (*versus Sepulchrum properantes vultibus submissis*⁶⁶). The vocabulary frequently includes verbs like *demittere*, *(se) inclinare, vertere, submittere (vultibus submissis)*, etc.

The expression of moods and emotions in liturgical music-drama was mostly achieved by means of the voice and the mode of delivery of the lines. Rubrics specifying this aspect show an amazing array of vocabulary related to vocal characteristics and line delivery. There are rubrics prescribing the sound and character of the voice to be used (e. g. *alta voce, humili voce, mediocri voce, sonora voce, supressa voce*) as well as those that prescribe the attitude of the singer, that of joy for the most part (e. g. *voce letabunda, exultanti voce*), or sorrow (e. g. *flebili voce, querula voce, lacrimabili voce*). Furthermore, some verbs expressing emotions (e. g. *iubilare, lacrimare, lamentari, plangere, plorare*) are closely related to the voice. The same applies to certain adverbs (e. g. *dulciter, leti, hilariter*) and adjectives (e. g. *flebilis, auctorabilis, iucundus*). However, some parts of the voice-specifying vocabulary are more concerned with the «technical» use of the voice and need to be interpreted by musicologists in relation to the concrete chants and with regard to the local music tradition. We also get somewhat ambiguous phrases; e. g. the phrase *alta voce* which can refer either to the pitch or volume or intensity⁶⁷.

To this date, there has not been a comprehensive philological analysis of the language, style and vocabulary of Latin rubrics of medieval liturgical Easter plays. One of the reasons may be that rubrics do not have a clearly defined «technical» or field language. Apart from a limited number of instances⁶⁸, there are hardly any neologisms or unusual terms to be found in rubrics. But rather there are a number of specific terms in rubrics that are related to the liturgical origin and context of Easter dramas on one hand and to their practical, «theatrical» use on the other one. Therefore the language and vocabulary of rubrics is enormously variable and rich. The variety also stems from the fact that every dramatic text has its own specific individual rubrics. The style and form of rubrics ranges from minimal, brief or abbreviated stage directions to detailed descriptions, sometimes almost narrative in character. Similarly, the vocabulary of rubrics reveals a variability and richness of different language

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⁶⁴ *Ludus paschalis* from Tours, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 438-447.
⁶⁵ VS from Meissen, K. Young, *The Drama*, p. 330-331.
⁶⁸ E. g. the term *deinfulatus*, see n. 36.
levels – predominantly liturgical, biblical (literary) and theatrical. In this article, I attempted to enumerate and comment on the chief aspects and features of rubrics in terms of the language, vocabulary and overall style, as well as outline possible working approaches to further study and analysis of rubrics.

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**Abstract.** — The article reflects on the specific language and style of the Latin rubrics that are commonly found in medieval Easter dramas. First, the meaning of the term *rubrica*, in classical and medieval Latin, is explained. Then follows a short discussion of the term regarding the context and origin of medieval liturgical drama and theatre, with a particular focus on the original function, role and status of rubrics. Special attention is paid to the extensive rubrics of the 10th century *Visitatio sepulchri* play from Winchester. The article then goes on to discuss the style and vocabulary of rubrics, exploring and commenting on the several language levels they manifest (liturgical, theatrical and biblical) in relation to the roots and the origin of Easter drama and its form. The different language levels are further analysed as part of the individual aspects reflected by the rubrics – speech attributions, costumes, gestures and movements, mode of delivery, etc. – with special regard to their vocabulary and overall style. The analysis includes numerous quotations in Latin of rubrics recorded in Latin Easter dramas, collected from sources preserved in different monastic communities and cathedral libraries of medieval Europe.